



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts
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Finance Committee Minutes 01-02-2002

MINUTES OF MEETING (approved by chair, co-chair)

7:30 PM Town hall hearing room

1/2/02

| | | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Janowitz* | Feinleib* | Kocur* | O'Neill* | Mahoney* |
| DeCoursey* | Connors* | Simmons* | Morrissette* | |
| Tosti* | Foskett* | Deyst* | Ronan* | |
| Piandes* | Franclemont* | | Olsen* | |
| DuBois* | Howard* | Fanning* | Tosi* | Kneeland* |

Indicates present

VISITORS: Selectmen Charlie Lyons, Town Counsel John Maher; Town Manager Phil Farrington, Town Treasurer John Bilafer, Town Planner Alan McClenen, Members of Symmes Advisory Committee: Phyllis Bailey, Lee Ellis, Allan Reedy, Bob Carey, Town Meeting Members Jackie Harrington, Chick Abbott, Jean Hopkins

MINUTES of 12/19/01 accepted as printed.

Symmes Purchase:

Tosti explained the agenda for the meeting: a series of presentations and other input, followed by discussion and a vote.

Maher reviewed the recommended issue. He requested that the Fincom approve part A (the appropriation) and that the Arlington Redevelopment Board approve part B (the wording required to qualify for urban renewal status).

Although part B was not provided, Maher explained the urban-renewal plan methodology under Chapter 121b, that there would be an operating agreement between the Board of Selectmen and the Redevelopment Board controlling the management and use of the property, and a cooperation agreement between the Symmes Advisory Committee and Redevelopment Board. Maher further explained that it would be similar to the vote taken in 1980 to authorize the Arlington Center renovation using an urban-renewal plan. Copies of this material had also been provided in the afternoon.

Foskett, using a slide projector, reviewed the history of the Symmes Advisory Committee and showed how the Symmes project could become revenue-neutral by 2006 in the best case or 2019 in the worst case for a particular redevelopment approach. This material was similar to material he had distributed three days earlier. He emphasized that this was only a sample approach. The committee expects to recommend an approach after about a year of working with outside professional planners.

Bilafer urged approval of the recommended vote saying that the Symmes redevelopment is a critical step in the ongoing public investment in the town's properties. He also stated that this action would be unlikely to affect the town's bond rating since it was specifically authorized by a debt exclusion vote.

Lyons urged approval, reminding the Fincom that originally the town had given the property to the hospital assuming it would be used for hospital purposes. Lyons also summarized the objectives the selectmen had set out for the town's development of the site (medical, commercial, residential and open space uses) and the Selectmen's criterion for revenue neutral or revenue positive outcomes, and that the voters supported the debt exclusion to purchase this

property by nearly a 2-to-1 margin.

Harrington questioned how serious the 40B threat really was.

During and after the presentation, members asked numerous questions and expressed a variety of opinions. The following is a sample of these questions.

Q: Why not have separate votes for parts A & B? **A:** There is only one article and creating a separate article to vote on after the warrant is closed is not legally possible.

Q: Is there a deadline for redevelopment under urban-renewal guidelines? **A:** No.

Q: Is state approval of the urban-renewal approach required to close the deal? **A:** Yes. The purchase-and-sale agreement allows an extension if such approval is delayed.

Q: Does the proposed role of the Symmes Advisory Committee exceed its original charge? **A:** No. It was chartered to develop recommendations on the uses or disposition of the property, such recommendations and advice to be provided to the Town meeting, Town Manager, Redevelopment Board and Town meeting.

Q: Who will select the developer? **A:** The Redevelopment Board.

Q: Why not make a specific time to present the development plan to Town Meeting? **A:** The concern was expressed that a specific schedule might detract from the appropriate diligence of the planning process. In addition the Committee is required to report its progress.

Q: If we sell the land to a developer, can't they still invoke 40B? **A:** No. The constraints of the sales agreement and the land restrictions under the urban-renewal process will govern.

Q: Why not base revenue neutral projections on appraiser's highest and best use? **A:** These uses do not meet the Board of Selectmen guidelines.

Q: Why not tear down the structures and avoid the operating cost? **A:** The lease back to Lahey is part of the deal. Might cost more since it would be an eminent domain taking. In addition the provision of medical services is part of the Board of Selectmen objectives and has been supported by the electorate.

Q: Will the town have to bring the main building up to code? **A:** No, because they already are.

Q: Will the Symmes Committee have staff and budget? **A:** That will continue to depend on town counsel and the town planner and the resources of the consultants which they will hire.

Q: How can a value of more than \$6.45m be justified by the appraisal? **A:** The town will add value by completing planning and permitting which eliminates a multi-year delay used by the appraiser to discount the value of the property.

Q: Why the operating expense of \$1.5m/yr for 4 yrs? **A:** The \$1.5m is based on info provided by Lahey. It may be too high but there is no way to be sure until the town has control. The planning process should take place in less than four years, but the four years of working capital insures the Town against risk and is an important component in getting the state approval for the urban renewal project.

Q: Why not include the budget for the \$14m in the vote? **A:** The budget will be controlled by the Redevelopment Board under guidelines established by the Board of Selectmen.

VOTED to approve the recommended vote as provided by the town counsel. 16-2.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS:

Address list circulated for approval or correction.
Next mtg Jan 14.

Peter B. Howard, secretary